

6. ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The primary intent of the alternatives evaluation in an EIR, as stated in Section 15126.6(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, is to "describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives." Further, the Guidelines state that "the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly." An EIR must describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The feasibility of an alternative may be determined based on a variety of factors including, but not limited to, site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and site accessibility and control.

CEQA provides the following guidelines for discussing alternatives to a proposed project (note: the proposed project is herein referred to as the "Proposed GPU"):

- An EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[a]).
- The range of potential alternatives to the proposed project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[c]).
- The EIR shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[d]).
- "No project" alternative . . . shall also be evaluated along with its impact. The "no project" analysis shall discuss the existing conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced, as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with

available infrastructure and community services. . . . When the project is the revision of an existing land use or regulatory plan, policy or ongoing operation, the “no project” alternative will be the continuation of the existing plan, policy or operation into the future. . . . If the project is other than a land use or regulatory plan . . . the “no project” alternative is the circumstance under which the project does not proceed. . . . After defining the “no project” alternative using one of these approaches, the lead agency should proceed to analyze the impacts of the “no project” alternative by projecting what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services (CEQA Guidelines 15126.6[e]).

Selection of Alternatives

The requirement that an EIR evaluate alternatives to the proposed project or alternatives to the location of the proposed project is a broad one; the primary intent of the alternatives analysis is to disclose other ways that the objectives of the project could be attained while reducing the magnitude of, or avoiding, the environmental impacts of the proposed project. Alternatives that are included and evaluated in the EIR must be feasible alternatives. However, the Public Resources Code and the CEQA Guidelines direct that the EIR need "set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice." The CEQA Guidelines provide definition for "a range of reasonable alternatives" and, thus, limit the number and type of alternatives that may need to be evaluated in a given EIR. According to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[f]:

The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. Of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determined could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project.

The objectives in the proposed General Plan Update are as follows:

- To guide the physical development of Wheatland over the next 20 years.
- To allow for future development within the Wheatland Planning Area, while preserving the City’s existing identity and Character.
- To ensure the community infrastructure keeps pace with development.
- To ensure the provision of a safe and convenient circulation system in the City of Wheatland.
- To encourage future economic growth within the City of Wheatland, while also providing adequate housing for all economic segments of the community.
- To provide economic growth that balances the existing development and future growth in Wheatland.
- To preserve agricultural land and uses in and adjacent to Wheatland and to ensure that there are open space buffers between Wheatland and surrounding cities.

- To protect current and future Wheatland residents from adverse effects of noise and other potential environmental hazards.

First and foremost, alternatives in an EIR must be feasible. In the context of CEQA Public Resources Code Section 21061.1, "feasible" is defined as:

...capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors.

Further, the following factors may be taken into consideration in the assessment of the feasibility of alternatives: site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and the ability of the proponent to attain site control. Finally, an EIR is not required to analyze alternatives when the effects of the alternative "cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative."

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DISMISSED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS IN THIS EIR

Lane Use Alternative A: East Bypass¹

The East bypass under this alternative has an effect on land uses, given the accessibility and visibility within the project area. Much of the future commercial and employment development would be located near the bypass access to Wheatland. However, Land Use Alternative A: East Bypass was considered, but dismissed because the alternative did not meet City land use objectives.

Land Use Alternative B: West Bypass¹

The Land Use Alternative B: West Bypass was originally considered because the eastern alignment would be more centrally located for long-term City growth. The West Bypass Alternative would also bisect the existing Sphere of Influence. This alternative was dismissed because the cost to construct the State Route 65 bypass would not be feasible and because additional development within the City limits would have to be moved away from flood-prone areas as well as raising the bypass to avoid potential flooding in a designated floodplain. In addition, the present railroad tracks would require additional railroad track crossings within the study area as well as longer bridge crossings near sensitive environmental areas along the Bear River south of the Bear River Hop Farm. Furthermore, future development within the western portion of the study area would impact wetlands currently located in Placer County. Therefore, this alternative has been dismissed because it does not meet the intended uses for the City of Wheatland and would have substantial adverse environmental impacts.

Land Use Alternative C: Village Concept¹

The Land Use Alternative C: Village Concept was considered because this alternative would establish smaller, defined neighborhoods and would include services within walking distance of most residences (approximately ¼ mile distance). Each of the seven

villages, encompassing approximately 60 acres of land each, would include medium and high-density residential housing, neighborhood commercial, a park, and an elementary school. The villages would be located evenly throughout the planning area, mainly along the proposed ring road about a ½ mile apart. This alternative was dismissed because the community of Wheatland thought that the Proposed GPU was a better fit for City's needs.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THIS EIR

No Project Alternative

The No Project Alternative would result in the continuation of the existing Wheatland General Plan. As a result, the No Project Alternative would accommodate substantially less development than the proposed project. While this Alternative would not meet the project objectives, CEQA requires the alternative to be analyzed.

Aesthetics

The No Project Alternative would include buildout of the Wheatland General Plan within city limits. Currently 17 percent of the land is undeveloped and minor aesthetic impacts would result with buildout within the City of Wheatland. The Proposed GPU could result in increased development outside of the city limits to create a larger urban setting. The majority of this land is currently agricultural. Therefore, this Alternative would have fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Agricultural Resources

The No Project Alternative would not significantly alter the agricultural setting within the city limits. Development within the City of Wheatland totals approximately 83 percent with approximately 17 percent of agricultural land allocated for future development. The proposed project would expand the General Plan Update study area to include additional land for development outside the city limits and would reduce the amount of agricultural resources within Yuba County. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Air Quality

The Proposed GPU would create air quality impacts from the construction of new residential and commercial development as well as the additional vehicles trips associated with the new development. The 1980 Wheatland General Plan predicted a low population at buildout (2,421 by 2005) and the City has nearly reached this estimate, but the General Plan Update identifies a lot greater growth level. The Housing Element Background Report population projection is estimated to be approximately 30,100 by the year 2025. Therefore, air quality impacts for the No Project Alternative would be less than the Proposed GPU.

Biological Resources

The No Project Alternative would include buildout of existing General Plan which includes undeveloped parcels and include Almond Estates, a commercial parcel east of Almond Estates, and a few additional parcels of land. These undeveloped parcels within the city limits, when developed, could result in biological impacts under the No Project Alternative. Although the No Project Alternative could potentially result in biological impacts, the Alternative would have fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Cultural Resources

The No Project Alternative would include buildout of existing General Plan which includes undeveloped parcels and include Almond Estates, a commercial parcel east of Almond Estates, and a few additional parcels of land. These undeveloped parcels within the city limits, when construction begins, could result in cultural impacts under the No Project Alternative. Although the No Project Alternative could potentially result in cultural impacts, the Alternative would have fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Geology

The geological and soil conditions under the No Project Alternative would not change; and the level of development would be limited to existing city limits, which would result in substantially decreased development. Therefore, impacts related to geology would not occur.

Hazards

Under the No Project Alternative, the use of the project site would not substantially change. Development potential under the No Project Alternative is limited to vacant parcels within the existing city limits (i.e., small portion of agricultural land in the northern portion within the city limits). The Proposed GPU includes development on agricultural lands outside the city limits. With the implementation of the Proposed GPU, the use of pesticides and other hazardous materials would be decreased. In addition, agricultural land would be developed within the current city limits and soil assessments would be conducted to remediate any contaminated soils. Furthermore, the area proposed for industrial uses under the No Project Alternative would be less than under the Proposed GPU. Thus, it might be expected that this Alternative could reduce potential use, handling, and transportation of hazardous materials and wastes. Therefore, compared to the Proposed GPU, the No Project Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to hazards.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The No Project Alternative includes the urbanized area with the City limits. Buildout within the City of Wheatland would not result in a significant change to the existing

drainage pattern for the project area. Therefore, compared to the Proposed GPU, the No Project Alternative would have no impact on hydrology and water quality.

Land Use

The No Project Alternative could result in full buildout of the City of Wheatland, anticipated by the current General Plan. In addition, zoning would be consistent within the city limits under the No Project Alternative. However, the Proposed GPU would require rezoning city-wide to accommodate new development and growth within the Wheatland study area. Therefore, compared to the Proposed GPU, land use impacts as identified for the No Project Alternative would result in fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Mineral Resources

The No Project Alternative includes the urbanized area within the City limits. Full buildout within the City of Wheatland would result in no impact to mineral resources. The Proposed GPU would involve the expansion of the existing city limits and would result in the loss of a minimal amount of mineral resources on 1-acre of land on Nichols Ranch. Therefore, compared to the Proposed GPU, the No Project Alternative would have no impact on mineral resources.

Noise

The Proposed GPU would create an increase in noise levels resulting from additional vehicle trips associated with increased development, and construction noise. While noise levels would be substantially less under the No Project Alternative, noise would still be slightly increased over existing levels due to possible buildout of the remaining vacant areas in the city limits. Therefore, while the noise levels would be decreased under this Alternative, existing urban noise impacts would slightly increase.

Population, Housing and Employment

The Proposed GPU would result in an increased number of jobs and a better jobs-to-housing balance. In addition, the increase in the number of available jobs would result in increased population which would result in a greater demand on services, which are discussed in other sections of this analysis.

Public Services

The No Project Alternative would not result in substantial new development within the City of Wheatland and would therefore result in minor additional public services demand. The Proposed GPU would include a significant amount of development and would require the expansion of the existing City limits and would result in impacts to public services. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have minor impacts on public services.

Recreation

The No Project Alternative would result in a minor amount of additional development resulting in an increased demand for park facilities. Although a greater demand for parks would be generated as a result of the General Plan Update buildout, the General Plan Update Land Use Map identifies additional parks to meet these demands.

Transportation and Circulation

The No Project Alternative would not substantially increase traffic in the surrounding area because buildout within the City limits is almost complete. However, SR 65 already operates at LOS F through the City limits. The Proposed GPU identifies an SR 65 Bypass east of the City, which would reduce traffic impacts along the existing SR 65 to a less than significant level. Therefore, compared to the Proposed GPU, fewer traffic impacts from the Existing Conditions/No Project Alternative would occur.

Utilities and Service Systems

The No Project Alternative would accommodate complete buildout within the City of the Wheatland and would slightly increase the demand for additional utilities and service systems in the project area. Therefore, this alternative would have no impact on utilities and service systems.

65 East Development Alternative

The 65 East Development Alternative would include the same level of development as the Proposed GPU, but involves shifting all future development to the east, out of the floodplain areas. It should be noted that Jones Ranch and Heritage Estates would be included as part of this Alternative.

Aesthetics

The 65 East Development Alternative would involve shifting all future development to the east. The Proposed GPU could result in increased development outside of the City limits to create a larger urban setting. The majority of this land is currently agricultural. Therefore, this Alternative would have similar impacts as the Proposed GPU.

Agricultural Resources

The 65 East Development Alternative would result in the conversion of agricultural land to an urban setting on the eastern side of the study area. However, agricultural lands within the eastern portion of the study area have a decreased agricultural quality than on the western side of the study area. This alternative would locate all development within the Sphere of Influence with some portions outside of the Study Area. The Proposed GPU would expand the study area to include additional land for development outside the

city limits and would reduce the amount of agricultural resources within Yuba County. Therefore, the 65 East Development Alternative would have fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Air Quality

The 65 East Development Alternative would create air quality impacts as a result of construction of new residential and other development as well as additional vehicles trips associated with new development. The development anticipated under this Alternative would be shifted east of SR 65 and out of any flood plain areas; however, the level of development would be the same as projected for the Proposed GPU. Therefore, air quality impacts for the 65 East Development Alternative would be the same as the Proposed GPU.

Biological Resources

The 65 East Development Alternative would include development of land in the eastern portion of the study area. These undeveloped parcels could result in biological impacts under the 65 East Development Alternative. The Proposed GPU could potentially result in the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of important biological resources located within the western portion of the study area. Although this Alternative could potentially result in biological impacts, the Alternative would have fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Cultural Resources

The SR 65 East Development Alternative would involve development only in the eastern portion of the GPU study area. Development of this area could result in impacts to cultural resources. Because the area of land would be the same as the Proposed GPU, the Alternative would potentially result in cultural impacts similar to the Proposed GPU.

Geology

The geological and soil conditions under the 65 East Development Alternative could potentially be impacted as a result of development of land within the study area. Expansive soils and liquefaction could potentially affect buildings constructed within the study area. In addition, soil erosion, as a result of construction activities could potentially impact the existing soil conditions. Therefore, the 65 East Development Alternative would result in impacts related to geology and would be similar to the Proposed GPU.

Hazards

Under the 65 East Development Alternative, the use of the study area would potentially change from a rural to an urban setting. The Alternative, as well as the GPU study area, includes agricultural lands outside the city limits. Implementation of either the 65 East Development Alternatives or the Proposed GPU would involve a decrease in the use of pesticides and other hazardous materials used for agricultural practices. Although hazards

related to agricultural uses would be reduced, potential new commercial and industrial development would introduce new sources of hazardous materials. Therefore, this Alternative and the Proposed GPU would result in fewer impacts related to hazards.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The 65 East Development Alternative would include the same level of development as the Proposed GPU, but would result in the shifting of all future development to the east where land is higher and outside of the floodplain; thereby resolving many of the levee issues that currently exist for many development areas identified for the Proposed GPU study area. Development of this Alternative as well as the Proposed GPU could result in a substantial change to the drainage pattern for the study area. However, appropriate detention basin drainage systems would be designed to accommodate increased storm water runoff for both Land Use Diagrams. Water quality impacts would be similar for both the Alternative and the Proposed GPU because the level of increased development that would generate urban pollutants would be the same. Overall, the Alternative and the Proposed GPU would result in fewer impacts related hydrology and water quality.

Land Use

The 65 East Development Alternative could result development of the eastern portion of study area. This alternative would result in the shifting of development east of SR 65 and outside of the floodplain areas. Under this Alternative, development would encroach into areas east of Jasper Lane currently designated for Urban Reserve. Therefore, agricultural incompatibility impacts would result from implementation of this Alternative, similar to those which would result from the Proposed GPU.

Mineral Resources

The 65 East Development Alternative would include development of agricultural land to the east of the City of Wheatland. This Alternative would be expected to result in no impacts to mineral resources. Therefore, compared to the Proposed GPU, the Alternative would have similar impact on mineral resources.

Noise

The 65 East Development Alternative involves generally the same area of potential future development as does the Proposed GPU. Therefore, this Alternative would create a substantial increase in noise levels due to increased development and related construction noise, as well as traffic noise due to the increased number of vehicles. Noise impacts for the 65 East Development Alternative would be similar to the Proposed GPU.

Population, Housing and Employment

The 65 East Development Alternative would involve generally the same amount and type of development as the Proposed GPU; thereby, resulting in an increase in population,

housing needs, and employment opportunities. This Alternative, as well as the Proposed GPU, would result in a higher number of jobs and a better jobs-to-housing balance. Overall, both the Alternative and the Proposed GPU would create additional housing and job opportunities within the City of Wheatland.

Public Services

The 65 East Development Alternative would be expected to result in substantial new development within the study area and may result in the expansion of the existing city limits. Therefore, impacts to public services would be increased, such as fire, police, and school services. However, because the level of development anticipated for this Alternative would be the same as the Proposed GPU, impacts would be similar overall.

Recreation

The 65 East Development Alternative would result in a substantial amount of additional development; thereby, increasing the demand for park facilities. Although a greater demand for parks would be generated, the Land Use Diagram for both the Alternative and Proposed GPU would include sufficient park sites to meet expected demands. Furthermore, applicants may opt to pay park impact fees rather than dedicate adequate on-site park acreage. Because the level of planned residential development is the same for both the Alternative and the Proposed GPU, similar park impact fees would be expected to be collected for park facilities. Overall, impacts to recreation facilities would be the same for the 65 East Development Alternative and the Proposed GPU. It should also be noted that Grasshopper Slough bisects the approximate entire length of the eastern portion of the Sphere of Influence. This natural watercourse could be incorporated as a future parkway/open space corridor component as part of the 65 East Development Alternative.

Transportation and Circulation

The 65 East Development Alternative would involve the shifting of future development to the east, but would result in the same amount of development as the Proposed GPU. This Alternative would substantially increase traffic in the study area. The Proposed GPU and the Alternative would include the future SR 65 Bypass east of the City, which would shift traffic from the current SR 65 highway to the bypass. However, without the construction of a bypass, similar to the Proposed GPU, traffic impacts along existing SR 65 would be significant and unavoidable for this Alternative.

Utilities and Service Systems

The 65 East Development Alternative would include development beyond the current city limits and would substantially increase the demand for additional utilities and service systems in the study area as the population increases. In addition, because of the relocation of development east of 65, sewer connections for new development to the future wastewater treatment plant planned on the west side of the City would not be as

direct and may prove more costly. Therefore, this Alternative could have slightly more impacts to utilities and service systems compared to the Proposed GPU.

Reduced Buildout Alternative

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would decrease the level of development by approximately 1,694 acres compared to the Proposed GPU. This Alternative would include the existing city limits and several parcels to the north, northeast, west, and southwest, including Almond Estates, Heritage Oaks Estates, Jones Ranch, Nichols Ranch, Stineman Ranch, and a portion of the Bear River Hop Farm (See Figure 6-1).

Aesthetics

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would have a reduced level of development compared to the Proposed GPU, but any new development beyond the city limits would create a larger urban setting. Therefore, because the majority of this land is currently agricultural, this Alternative would result in significant aesthetic impacts.

Agricultural Resources

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would result in the conversion of agricultural land to an urban setting outside of the city limits. Prime agricultural land is located to the west of the City limits which is proposed for future development under this Alternative. Therefore, because this Alternative would reduce the amount of agricultural resources within Yuba County and would result in the conversion of prime farmland and significant impact would occur.

Air Quality

The Reduce Buildout Alternative would create air quality impacts as a result of construction of new residential and other development and the addition of vehicles trips associated with increased development. The Reduce Buildout Alternative project area is approximately 1,694 acres smaller in area compared to the Proposed GPU. As a result, the level of development associated with this Alternative would be correspondingly decreased. Overall, the Reduced Buildout Alternative would have fewer air quality impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Biological Resources

The Reduce Buildout Alternative would include development of agricultural land outside of the city limits. These undeveloped parcels could result in biological impacts under the Reduce Buildout Alternative. The Proposed GPU could potentially result in the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of important biological resources located within the western portion of the study area. Although the Reduced Buildout Alternative could potentially result in biological impacts, this Alternative would have fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

**Figure 6-1
Reduced Buildout Alternative**

Cultural Resources

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would involve development of agricultural land outside of the city limits. This undeveloped land, when construction begins, could result in cultural impacts under the Reduced Buildout Alternative. Although this Alternative would significantly reduce the amount of development in the study area, this Alternative could potentially result in cultural resources impacts.

Geology

The geological and soil conditions under the Reduced Buildout Alternative could potentially be impacted as a result of development of land within the study area. Expansive soils and liquefaction could affect buildings constructed within the study area. In addition, soil erosion, as a result of construction activities could potentially impact the existing soil conditions. Although, the Reduced Buildout Alternative would result in a smaller degree of development, impacts related to geology would likely occur.

Hazards

The Reduced Buildout Alternative includes agricultural lands outside the city limits and would likely change from a rural to an urban setting. With the implementation of the Reduced Buildout Alternative, the use of pesticides and other hazardous materials used for agricultural practices in the project area would be decreased. Although hazards related to agricultural uses would be reduced, there is the potential new commercial and industrial development would introduce new sources of hazardous materials. Although this Alternative could present new hazards into the project area, the Reduced Buildout Alternative would result fewer impacts related to hazards than the Proposed GPU.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would result in a decreased level of development compared to the Proposed GPU, but would still include development in portions of the floodplain. Development of the Reduced Buildout Alternative would result in impacts to the drainage pattern for this Alternative, but would likely result in fewer impacts than the Proposed GPU.

Land Use

The Reduced Buildout Alternative could result in development outside of the city limits to the north, northwest, northeast, west, and south. Land located within this defined area would be allocated for future development, which could be annexed to the City of Wheatland. This Alternative would result in the conversion of agricultural land to accommodate additional residential and commercial development outside of the current city limits. This Alternative would reduce the study area by approximately 1,694 acres, which would substantially reduce the level of development, and therefore incompatibility issues, compared to the Proposed GPU. Although the Reduced Buildout Alternative

would have fewer land use impacts than the Proposed GPU, impacts would remain similar overall.

Mineral Resources

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would include development of agricultural lands outside the current city limits. This Alternative would result in no impact to mineral resources and would have similar impacts as the Proposed GPU.

Noise

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would create an increase in both noise levels due to increased development and related construction noise and also traffic noise due to the increased number of vehicles. Although noise impacts for the Reduced Buildout Alternative would be less than the Proposed GPU, significant and unavoidable noise impacts would still be anticipated.

Population, Housing and Employment

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would involve a decreased amount of development area, approximately 1,694 acres less than the Proposed GPU. This Alternative would result in an increase in population, housing needs, and employment opportunities. The Reduced Buildout Alternative would impact the population, housing, and employment within the study area, but compared to the Proposed GPU, this Alternative would result in fewer impacts.

Public Services

The Reduced Buildout Alternative could result in new development within the study area and would require the expansion of the existing city limits and would result in impacts to public services. Although this Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to public services than the Proposed GPU, the existing city limits have nearly reached capacity for public services and any new development would significantly impact existing public services.

Recreation

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would result in additional development over what is currently planned. Therefore, this Alternative would increase the demand for park facilities. Although a greater demand for parks would be generated under the Proposed GPU, impacts would be expected to be similar overall. Furthermore, the Land Use Diagram for both the Proposed GPU and Reduced Buildout Alternative would include adequate park areas to meet the level of development identified for the Plan.

Transportation and Circulation

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would result in substantially less development than the Proposed GPU by approximately 1,694 acres. This Alternative would generate an increase in traffic within the study area. The Reduced Buildout Alternative would not be able to accommodate the future SR 65 Bypass as identified for the Proposed GPU. Although the Reduced Buildout Alternative would result in a decrease of traffic compared to the Proposed GPU, traffic impacts for the Alternative would still result in significant traffic impacts. Therefore, because the SR 65 currently operates at LOS F, any additional traffic would create a significant impact.

Utilities and Service Systems

The Reduced Buildout Alternative would include development beyond the current City limits and would likely increase the demand for additional utilities and service systems in the study area as population and housing increases. Although this Alternative would result in reduced development, compared to the Proposed GPU, the Reduced Buildout Alternative would result in increased impacts to utilities and service systems.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

An EIR is required to identify the environmentally superior alternative from among the range of reasonable alternatives that are evaluated. Section 15126(d)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an environmentally superior alternative be designated that states that if the environmentally superior alternative is the “no project” alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among other alternatives.

The No Project Alternative would be considered the environmentally superior alternative to the Proposed GPU and the other alternatives because there would be no physical changes to the environment from the existing conditions. Significant and unavoidable adverse impacts associated with the implementation of the No Project Alternative would not occur. While this Alternative would be environmentally superior, it would not meet any of the project objectives.

All of the development alternatives evaluated would generate the same types of impacts and would be expected to generate significant and unavoidable impacts similar to the Proposed GPU. However, the 65 East Development Alternative would have less severe impacts because the majority of the development would take place outside of the floodplain, thereby reducing impacts related to flooding and drainage. In addition, shifting development to the east would preserve important agricultural land in the western portion of the study area, thus reducing impacts on agricultural resources. Furthermore, the shifting of development to the east would preserve existing wetlands located north of Dry Creek, west of SR 65. However, this Alternative would create a greater distance for connection to the future wastewater treatment plant. Impacts would still occur related to aesthetics, air quality, geology, cultural resources, hazards, noise, demand for public services, and traffic.

¹ City of Wheatland, *Issues and Options Report*, December 30, 2004.